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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCOR](#) [KIPR](#) [EFIN](#) [ECON](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: AMBASSADOR'S COURTESY CALL ON ACTING EFCC
CHAIRMAN

REF: A. 07 ABUJA 2627
[1](#)B. ABUJA 20

Classified By: Ambassador Robin R. Sanders for Reasons 1.4 (b & d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Ambassador made a courtesy call February 11 on Ibrahim Lamorde, acting Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), in a public show of support for the institution after the assignment of Executive Chairman Nuhu Ribadu to study leave. She underscored U.S. bilateral cooperation and capacity building support to the EFCC on major areas of anti-corruption such as money laundering, intellectual property, and financial crimes. She also noted the long standing working relationship with the Financial Crimes Unit, and underscored the U.S. interest in ensuring that the EFCC had the same vigor, forthrightness, and commitment to fight corruption despite the fact that Chairman Ribadu was on study leave. Lamorde assured that this was the case and that neither the mandate nor commitment of the EFCC had or would change. He noted that there had not been interference in the EFCC current cases by members of the executive branch since Ribadu's departure. END SUMMARY.

PUBLIC SESSION

[1](#)2. (U) On February 11, 2008, the Ambassador made a courtesy call on the EFCC's Abuja Headquarters. USG participants included the Ambassador, EconCouns, INLOff and INL FSN. EFCC participants included Acting Chairman Lamorde, Commission Secretary Emmanuel Akomaye, Head of International Liaison

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Tukkur Modibbo, Head of Information Technology (IT) Ekeh Chinedu and Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) Director Bayo Okauru. Various media representatives were present for the first part of the meeting.

[1](#)3. (U) Lamorde expressed appreciation for the support the USG has given to the EFCC since its inception in 2003. He named a number of USG personnel who were instrumental in setting up the Commission and the assistance that USG law enforcement agencies, such as FBI and US Secret Service, have provided since its early days. Lamorde also praised USG capacity building and training programs that EFCC officers and NFIU

analysts received at the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA-Botswana) and the FBI Academy in Quantico, VA. In addition, he was very appreciative of the immense support given by the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FINCEN) to the NFIU in persuading the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to recognize Nigeria's capabilities, thus enabling Nigeria's FIU to join the Egmont Group. He underscored that USG support has allowed the NFIU to become a first class FIU. Lamorde assured the Ambassador that the EFCC will continue to do its job diligently and that all USG assistance will be meticulously applied to fighting corruption and financial crimes.

¶4. (U) The Ambassador thanked Lamorde and said she wanted to underscore USG support and commitment to the EFCC. She noted that NFIU is recognized by the U.S. as an effective organization, commended the EFCC's vigor in tackling its mission and noted continued USG training and equipment already in the pipeline, focusing especially on building transparency and upholding the rule of law.

CLOSED DOOR SESSION: EFCC Morale, Operations and Needs

¶5. (SBU) After the departure of the press, the Ambassador asked Lamorde to comment on morale in view of Ribadu's departure. Lamorde indicated that morale is high and that employees have accepted and adapted to Ribadu's transfer. However, the press continues to distort facts by making sensational claims that create doubt about the EFCC's dedication and fortitude. Lamorde underlined that the EFCC has strong institutional capacity and precepts and can withstand the departure of any individual. The Acting Chairman added that a culture of success and professionalism had been established at the EFCC and that there was no turning back. Lamorde indicated that EFCC has good working

relationships with other GON agencies, including the Attorney General's office, which had previously been seen as contesting the EFCC's authority to prosecute.

¶6. (SBU) The Ambassador inquired whether there was interference from any quarter on any pending cases, such as that of former Governor James Ibori. Lamorde said the perception of interference is inaccurate as the EFCC was not being "teleguided" on its activities by any organ of government. With regard to efforts to consolidate the EFCC and other anti-corruption bodies, Lamorde insisted there was no legislative bill to consolidate the EFCC and other anti-corruption bodies. (Note: This contradicts information from Senator Sola Akinyede, Chairman of the Committee on Drugs, Narcotics and Financial Crimes and Anti-Corruption, which has direct oversight over the EFCC as he has been exploring such a move).

¶7. (SBU) Lamorde requested assistance to create a computerized criminal database and information system (Ribadu had also requested this in his December 2007 departure meeting with the Ambassador) to help the agency manage its information, allowing it also to be able to share with other local and international law enforcement agencies. The Ambassador said that the USG would look into our ability to do this and pass the request back to Washington. INLOff indicated that there are many off-the-shelf IT software products for establishing such a system. However, he pointed out that infrastructure and licensing issues should be considered first, and could considerably drive up the costs.

Copyright Issues

¶8. (SBU) EconCouns expressed USG interest in working with EFCC, NFIU, and the Central Bank to assure that employees of financial institutions receive adequate training in the area of identifying or following trends in Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) and Currency Transaction Reports (CTRs). Experts had observed that for the relative size of Nigeria's financial sector, the number of STRs and CTRs appeared rather

low. He suggested the need for a thorough review of potential lapses, and that the Embassy would be happy to assist. Lamorde agreed that there were lapses in detection, and pledged to solicit feedback on the matter from EFCC staff.

¶9. (SBU) EconCouns also noted that more has to be done on the Intellectual Property Rights front, as there has been a surge in illegal, pirated optical discs (i.e., DVDs, CDs) and asked whether the EFCC was working with the National Copyright Commission (NCC) on this issue. Lamorde stated that although the EFCC had compiled referral files for NCC, that there has been a distinct lack of progress. He believed that there should be a specialized law enforcement unit in the NCC that could investigate, arrest, and prosecute offenders, and said that NCC Chair Adewopo had rejected EFCC's offer to provide a senior officer to develop and head up such a unit. He added that Adewopo was "more interested in publicity than enforcement" and had been questioned regarding seized counterfeit compact disks that had been illegally destroyed last year by NCC staff. He agreed that maybe a mentoring program could be set up to provide NCC staff more direction as well as the skills necessary to properly address their duties and responsibilities.

EFCC's Institutional Development and Rumors of a New Chairwoman

¶10. (C) Lamorde stressed that any discussions in the press or elsewhere of replacements for EFCC's leadership have not yet been confirmed. The EFCC is going about its business quietly and will continue to do so despite these rumors. Meanwhile, news reports about a targeted assault on the EFCC Chief of Staff has been unsubstantiated and may have been a story planted by foes to intimidate EFCC personnel.

¶11. Following this, INLOff held extensive discussions with Lamorde and EFCC Commission Secretary Emmanuel Akomaye on

February 26 and Senator Akinyede on February 27 regarding a news story that President Umaru Yar'Adua would seek the Senate's confirmation for the appointment of retired Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG), Faraida Waziri, as the new Chairman of the EFCC. The story on Waziri was reported initially in the Daily Independent on Sunday February 24, 2008. Lamorde and Akomaye vehemently denied the story that a new Chairperson was in the works, and dismissed it as a trial balloon floated by former Gov. James Ibori's camp to disrupt his prosecution by the EFCC. They indicated that the Daily Independent is owned by Gov. Ibori and no other credible sources have reported it. Sen. Akinyede in a meeting with the Ambassador, PolOff and INLOff on February 27 indicated that he cannot confirm the story but was disturbed enough by it that he contacted Lamorde who also denied it to him. In any case, Akinyede indicated that he planned to hold a Committee meeting to discuss the issue in anticipation of any such nomination. He opined that such a nomination would not pass through his Committee on procedural grounds as, under the EFCC Establishment Act, the President would first have to send a letter removing the current Executive Chairman Nuhu Ribadu before he can submit a nomination for a replacement to the Senate.

¶12. (C) Comment: To be sure the EFCC, personified by Ribadu, now has many enemies because of its effectiveness in the fight against corruption. However, Ribadu may have compromised the institution's credibility by his alleged selective pursuit of Obasanjo's opponents especially before last year's presidential elections. In his zeal to achieve results, he politicized himself and the EFCC. His perceived charismatic and brazen style although impressive in the Nigerian context, has also made him some very powerful personal enemies. He has been engaged in a courageous fight against corruption at a very high personal cost. However, whether he returns to the EFCC or not, we should not tether our anti-corruption and financial crimes agenda to any one person but to the institution of the EFCC, working with it to

ensure it maintains its vigor and publicly and privately denouncing any attempts to reduce its effectiveness. Lamorde, now the new Acting Chairman, has also been behind the EFCC's ascent as a first class law enforcement agency. He has been diligently and discretely working cases while Ribadu has been providing the inspiration and leadership. The USG and international community should continue to monitor developments at the EFCC while continuing to support the institution. END COMMENT.
SANDERS